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## French Psychology of Religion

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Patrick Vandermeersch

The failure of second naïveté.

Some landmarks in the history of French Psychology of Religion.

Very little is still known of the remarkable period of psychology of religion when French psychoanalysis and theology converged. A single formulation by P. Ricoeur has survived: second naïveté. It is often quoted, and in the epilogue to his impressive overview of the psychology of Religion,<sup>1</sup> David Wulff refers to it when he proposes post-critical belief as an important topic for further research.<sup>2</sup> Few people know, however, the context in which this formulation was recorded in 1960, nor what it exactly meant at that time. In the meantime, the whole problem linked with it has faded away in Western Europe, and only recently have isolated words reappeared in America. Being a European, I shall not discuss the question of whether or not one could place current American issues concerning religion in the framework of Ricoeur's 1960 statement on belief. In this article, I shall restrict myself to a rough sketch of the context in which the sentence on *second naïveté* appeared for the first time, thereby giving a glimpse of a very interesting but all too often ignored part of the history of psychology of religion.

While writing this article, one of the most astonishing things I realised was how easily ideas could circulate at that time, as important publications were very soon translated into many European languages. At that time, the 'Network' was more of a reality than many present-day research managers could dream of. The deliberately adopted European style of recording footnotes will display time and again how essential books were very quickly translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German and (although to a lesser extent) English. The psychology of religion with which we are dealing has really been very influential in a significant part of the world.

### **The peculiarities of European Catholicism**

It must be very hard for an American, even an American Catholic, to get a clear view of the different shapes European Catholicism has adopted during

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1. David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion. Classic and Contemporary*, (1st ed.: 1991) New York (John Wiley & Sons), 1997.

2. Actually, the term 'post-critical belief' refers to the current research of my friend and colleague D. Hutsebaut from the Leuven University in Louvain, and it differs substantially from 'second naïveté'.

the last few centuries. Firstly, one should sharply distinguish two types of countries. In the first type, Catholicism coexisted with Protestantism and had to preserve distinctive characteristics in order to maintain its own identity. In other countries, Catholicism had almost a monopoly in the religious sphere. There 'Catholic', 'Christian', 'believer' and 'religious' could be indiscreetly used as synonyms. However, the reality indicated by those terms was neither compact nor uniform. Although there was, and is, no denominational differentiation, one can find quite distinct features under one and the same heading. There were and are conservative Catholics, yes indeed. But there have also been very progressive, even revolutionary ones, and they have played an important part in the political history of nineteenth-century Europe. The most famous example of revolutionary Catholicism is, of course, that of the French *abbés* of the lower clergy, who were the regular purchasers of the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert, and who triggered the French Revolution when they decided to join the *tiers état* so that the power of the king ultimately collapsed. In 1789 and 1830 in Belgium, and in 1830 in Poland, there were revolutions under Catholic guidance. And there are still other, less known examples. If you can manage to finance a journey to Portugal, and you have the chance to seek some shadow in a small square in Viseu, not far from the restaurant listed in the *Rough Guide*, please examine the statue dedicated 'to our bishop, our great revolutionary'. Read the quotes of his favourite sentences, like 'Religion is just like salt: a bit is perfect, but too much spoils the whole meal'. Being a Belgian, born in a small country between France and the Netherlands, I thought I knew how divergent Catholicism could be between neighbouring countries, but in Viseu I realised that the differences within nineteenth-century European Catholicism were bigger than I had imagined.

In dealing with European Catholicism, one should be aware of how all those differences were brought about by the vicissitudes of history. For, if the twentieth century has established, on the surface, a certain conformity and synchronicity in the cycle of conservative and progressive phases in the Catholic Church, the differences in the nineteenth century's underpinning should not be overlooked. Nevertheless, there are some general trends. Seen from Rome, the problem appeared as follows. During the French Revolution and the Napoleonic age, the papal authority had lost the moderate amount of authority it has previously possessed. The nineteenth century was the time of recovery, but in a paradoxical way. The Pope - or, better, as was said in earlier times: *La cour de Rome*, the Roman court - had lost his political power. However, bit by bit, he managed to conquer moral authority, and brought this to a peak never previously attained. In 1870, the Pope had lost his papal estates, but he had become infallible.

In this context, the main concern for Rome was to re-establish obedience to authority in the minds of the Catholics. Too many of them had been attracted to the ideals of freedom and democracy.<sup>3</sup> Intellectualised Catholicism was dangerous. So Rome's Catholic 'Restoration' actually reiterated the tactic that had been used to fight Protestantism two-and-a-half centuries previously.<sup>4</sup> Instead of discussing matters of belief on a theoretical level, it had then appealed to human sentiment, however paradoxical it might be. For, in theory, Catholicism advocates a view on belief which is rooted in the intellectual sphere, while Luther had insisted upon the fact that believing primarily means trust, and thus belongs essentially to the heart. But, in practice, the Catholic reaction to Protestantism had favoured popular religion, in which the Virgin Mary and a devotional fascination for holy suffering (the Holy Heart of Christ, but also of Mary, of Joseph) occupied a central place.<sup>5</sup> The 'Stabat Mater dolorosa' became a favourite portrayal - and a favourite theme for composing music. At the same time, the celibate priest gradually became a reality. A mere coincidence? On a more profound psychological level, probably not. In any case: the Council of Trent (1545-1563) had decided to establish seminaries in which young males would be trained to fulfil the newly outlined ideals of a parish priest: he should become not only a dispenser of sacraments, but also a trustworthy confessor giving spiritual guidance to the faithful who were becoming increasingly concerned with their feelings of guilt.<sup>6</sup>

The nineteenth-century Catholic 'Restoration' tried to use the same remedies to cope with the religious crisis that had again surfaced during

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3. For the historical context, see the classic overviews such as that by L.J. Rogier, R. Aubert and M.D. Knowles, *Nouvelle histoire de l'Église*, Paris, Le Seuil, 5 vol., 1963-75. See also a fascinating book on the liberal Catholics in France during the nineteenth century: J. Cabanis, *Lacordaire et quelques autres*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982.

4. A good introduction: J. Delumeau, *Le catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1st ed.: 1971, 6th revised ed.: 1996. Earlier English translation: *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire. A New View on Counter Reformation*, London, Burns and Oates, 1977.

5. In fact, the theme was not completely new. It could be traced back to the Rhenan mystique of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, where the triumphant Christ of the Resurrection had been replaced by the suffering Christ. But, it was during the Counter Reformation that this view became widespread. Sentimentalism increased and progressively displaced the great spiritual traditions of Jansenism and Quietism that were the last bastions of high standard Catholic thought. Lots of religious congregations established in the seventeenth century refer to holy suffering in their spirituality. See: H. Marc-Bonnet, *Histoire des ordres religieux*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (Que sais-je), 2nd ed.: 1955. Cl. Lesegretain, *Les grands ordres religieux, hier et aujourd'hui*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.

6. See the standard work of J. Delumeau, *Le péché et la peur. La culpabilisation en occident (XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles)*, Paris, Fayard, 1983; Engl. tr.: *Sin and Fear: the Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th-18th centuries*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1990. See also his lesser-known book on confession: *L'aveu et le pardon. Les difficultés de la confession*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.

the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. However, the situation was different. The separation between Church and State had become a given fact. Therefore, the ecclesiastic authorities had to find other means to give the faithful the psychological feeling of belonging to a Mother Church. In the appeal to sensibility in piety and devotion, a huge part was devoted to the Virgin Mary. No century has ever been as 'Maria-oriented' as the nineteenth century. Her apparitions started with Catherine Labouré in July 1830, during the Revolution in Paris, and she warned France that if the cross was treated with contempt, blood would flow. Then she appeared in La Salette in 1846. A programmatic dogma was proclaimed about her in 1854, that of the Immaculate Conception. The dogma, that has nothing to do with virginity, states that Mary was the only human being born without Original Sin. Proclaimed shortly after K. Marx's Communist Manifesto (1848) and A. Comte's *Catéchisme positiviste* (1852), the dogma aimed to give an answer to them in a devotional way. As Mary was the only one born without sin, no other human being should believe that the human mind and the human will could give trustworthy advice for governing society. Let us thus remain humble, very humble, as a child under the protection of a sovereign mother... When a woman appeared to Bernadette in Lourdes in 1858, she was identified after a while - not without some prompting by the clergy - as being the 'Immaculate Conception'.<sup>7</sup> Mary continued her apparitions: Pontmain (1871), Krüth-Neubois (1872), Pellevoisin, St-Palais and Marpingen (1876), Dittrichswald (1877), and she continued so often that there was sometimes explicitly spoken of an epidemic.<sup>8</sup>

In this very peculiar devotional context, with its emphasis upon an influential mother figure (poorly counterbalanced by a Saint Joseph in the Holy Family), sex increasingly became the central issue in Catholic morality. An acceleration took place when, in August 1930, the Anglican Lambeth Conference accepted contraception as being licit. The Vatican reacted immediately and the same year (actually on 31 December 1930) the papal encyclical *Casti conubii* severely condemned every form of birth control. From then on, a rampant war took place in order to move, little by little, the official Roman standpoint. Catholic theologians and physicians tried to have some more 'natural' ways of limiting offspring accepted, such as taking the menstrual

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7. R. Laurentin, *Lourdes: dossier et documents authentiques*, Paris, Lethielleux, 7 vol., 1957-1966.

8. A. Ladon, *Les apparitions en Belgique. Une épidémie mentale contemporaine*, (Monographies Neuro-psychiatriques) Paris, Doin, 1937. Looking for more information on the apparitions of the Virgin Mary, I actually found little in a book that is often quoted: Jeanne Danemare, *Histoire du culte de la Vierge et de ses apparitions*, Paris, Fayard, 1958. A better (but not critical) overview is supplied by B. Chevallier and B. Gouley, *Je vous salue Marie. Guide pratique et historique de la dévotion mariale*, Paris, Fayard, 1981. For a general reflection, see E. Maeckelberghe, *Desperately seeking Mary. A feminist appropriation of a traditional religious symbol*, (1st ed.: 1991) Kampen, Kok Pharos, 1994.

cycle into account with the use of the thermometer or the calendar. Couldn't this be accepted, after all, it was not unnatural? After an initial papal 'no', these practices gradually seemed to be less immoral and, at a certain moment, one could behave as if they had always been the accepted Catholic way to approach contraception. But in the case that serious Catholic couples would nevertheless be compelled to engage in sexual intercourse, shouldn't they be allowed to practice *la carezza*, penetration without ejaculation? More than a mild smile is needed to understand the obsession of both the Church authorities and the faithful to have the Catholic bedroom well regulated.<sup>9</sup> But one should really be aware that this was the topic *par excellence* to test if one was a real Catholic or not.

So one can understand that psychoanalysis was received rather sympathetically by those Catholics who wanted to free themselves from the obsession with sex and, starting from there, from a conception of morality reduced to the obedient following of detailed prescriptions for everyday life. Of course, everyone knew that Freud himself was an atheist and had written some essays expressing his views that religion would be overcome by science but, in this, Freud only repeated what one was used to hearing from other scientists, and Freud's argumentation did not touch the religious problem. As to France, which would play the central role in the acceptance of psychoanalysis by Catholics, how much did the French public really know of Freud? Only a limited part of Freud's work had been translated into French in those days.<sup>10</sup> Freud was mainly known through the work of R. Dalbiez,<sup>11</sup> who made a sharp distinction between psychoanalysis as a valuable therapy and the questionable philosophical part in Freud's oeuvre. In France, even before the Second World War, there had already been psychoanalysts who were known to be Catholics, such as R. Laforgue who was interested in spirituality.<sup>12</sup> Thus, theologians did not feel uncomfortable about using psychoanalysis as a liberating technique in a religious world where candles, sweet sado-masochistic representations of holy suffering, guilt and sex had overgrown real concern about the existence of God and His relation to mankind.

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9. A classic: J.T. Noonan, *Contraception. A History of its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966.

10. Only recently has a complete and accurate translation of Freud's collected works been undertaken, and this is far from conclusion: S. Freud, *Oeuvres complètes*, under the supervision of A. Bourguignon, P. Cotet et J. Laplanche, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

11. R. Dalbiez, *La méthode psychanalytique et la doctrine freudienne*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 2. vol, 1st ed.: 1936, 2nd ed.: 1949.

12. E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, p.274.

### Psychoanalysis rescuing Catholic guilt on sexual matters

After the Second World War, progressive and optimistic tendencies surfaced among Catholic intellectuals. France was taking a leading position, with the so-called *Nouvelle Théologie*.<sup>13</sup> This approach advocated a philosophically coherent reflection upon human religious experience. At the origin, a reappraisal of the 'real' Thomas Aquinas was at stake, for one deplored that a century of scolasticism had covered up Aquinas' sharp views on the intrinsic relationship between theological reflection and human reason. Under his patronage, acceptance of new scientific insights followed, evolutionism included. The encyclical *Humani generis* (1950) tried to stop these new ideas. The same year, a new dogma concerning Mary was declared: that she had been taken to Heaven, body and soul, directly after her death - a new emphasis upon the unicity of the Immaculate Conception.

This authoritarian act actually only emphasised the feelings of protest that were already present. They were acted out in the zone where they probably have their permanent psychological seat: the area of sexual morality.

In August 1948, the London International Congress on Mental Health was held. This large-scale conference was the confluence of three different groups that had previously held their own congresses. One of those, the International Conference on Medical Psychotherapy, had chosen 'guilt' as central theme.<sup>14</sup> The proceedings reveal very interesting discussions and famous names.<sup>15</sup> After the solemn mass on 15 August in Westminster Abbey,

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13. There is a very good overview in J.M. Connolly, *The Voices of France. A Survey of Contemporary Theology in France*, New York, MacMillan, 1961. To get an impression of the way theologians experienced the main concerns of their disciplines in those days, see J. Daniélou, 'Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse', *Études*, 1946, vol. CCXLIX, pp.5-21; Y. Congar, 'Tendances actuelles de la pensée religieuse', *Cahiers du nouveau monde*, 1948, vol. IV, pp.33-50; R. Aubert, *La théologie catholique au milieu du XXe siècle*, Tournai, Casterman, 1954.

14. *International Congress on Mental Health, London 1948*, vol. III: *Proceedings of the International Conference on Medical Psychotherapy, 11th-14th August*, London, Lewis & Co., s.d. For the history of the I'A.I.E.M.P.R., I am very indebted to the work of Colette Degives, who maintains the archives of that society, and who collected the most important documents, with regard to its foundation, in a privately printed volume: *Pré-histoire, Fondation de l'A.I.E.M.P.R., et récit de ses fondements*. The address: Central Office of the A.I.E.M.P.R., 11, Chemin de Tattes-Fontaine, CH-1253 Vandoeuvres.

15. The first plenary session was on the 'Genesis of Guilt', with J. Delay as chairman, H.G. van der Waals, Rev. Thomas Gilby o.p. and A. Hesnard as the main speakers, and E. Jones as chairman of the discussion; opener of the discussion: I. Hendrick; among the speakers in the discussion: M. Choisy-Clouzet. The second plenary session was on 'Guilt and the Dynamics of Psychological Disorder in the Individual'. Chairman: H. Fulchignoni; main speakers: D. Brinkmann and John Rickman, President of the congress: J.R. Rees; chairman of the discussion: H. Chrichton-Miller; opener of the discussion: J.H. van der Hoop; among the speakers in the discussion: M. Klein. The third plenary session was on 'Collective Guilt'. Chairman: M.K. el Kholy; main speakers: M. Mead, E. Krijgers-Janzen, P. Bjerre; chairman of the discussion: W. Overholser; opener of the discussion: H.V. Dicks; among the speakers in the discussion: M.

some Catholic participants met privately and talked a lot about the problems of mental hygiene in their own church. Most of them were British,<sup>16</sup> but there was also a Belgian jesuit, A. Snoeck, and a very active French woman, Maryse Choisy.<sup>17</sup> They decided to organise congresses for Catholic psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, but as the English were rather hesitant about where and when, Maryse Choisy took the initiative to distribute invitations. She was involved in the *Psychè* journal,<sup>18</sup> which had already run for three years, and which had already organised congresses on related topics in the abbey of Royaumont in the Val-d'Oise. It was, however, in the Benedictine abbey of Bec-Hellouin in Normandy that the first conference for Catholic psychiatrists and psychologists was held, from 16 to 23 April 1949. There, the participants decided to organise an annual congress on 'Psychiatry and clinical psychology'<sup>19</sup> to deal with problems regarding Catholics in particular. And so it came to pass, in 1950 at the Jesuit centre in Chatelard near Lyon, in 1951 in London, and in 1952 in Amersfoort (the Netherlands). There, it was decided that the next conference should be a major event. So the fifth congress took place during the Easter period in Rome, and the chosen theme was: 'The basic attitude of the Christian psychotherapist'.

Having a congress in Rome had to include a papal audience. The congress members were rather surprised on 13 April 1953 to hear Pius XII say

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Choisy-Clouzet.

16. L. King, s.j., Professor of Psychology at the Heythrop College in Oxford, Dr Fitzgerald, Dr Burns, Miss Barbara Low (an early disciple of Freud).

17. She published extensively on psychoanalysis and Catholicism, but also on Yoga: *L'anneau de Polycrate: essai sur la culpabilité collective et recherche d'une éthique psychanalytique*, Paris, Psyche, 1948. *Psychanalyse et catholicisme*, Paris, l'Arche, 1950; *Le chrétien devant la psychanalyse*, Paris, Tequi, 1955; (with Masson-Oursel et al.); *Qu'est-ce que la psychanalyse?* Paris, Arche, 1950. *La métaphysique des Yogas: essais sur les techniques indiennes de la sublimation*, Genève, Mont-Blanc, s.d. The information on the origin of the 'International Catholic Congresses of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology' is taken from the account given by M. Choisy herself in an undated letter to J.-J. Lopez Ibor (end 1955-beginning 1956) and in her closing address to the Madrid congress in 1957 (Archives of the A.I.E.M.P.R.). She refers to what she wrote - nr. 30-31 of *Psychè* - but I was unable to trace it. One finds some (rather sarcastic) biographical notes on her in E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.206-207.

18. *Psychè*. Revue Internationale de psychanalyse et des sciences de l'homme, 1946-1957.

19. Although the Congress resolutions speak of a 'Comité Organisateur Permanent des Congrès Internationaux Annuels de Psychiatres, Psychothérapeutes analytiques et Psycho-pédagogues Catholiques - Permanent Organizing Committee for International Congresses of Catholic Psychiatrists, Analytical Psychotherapists and Child-Guidance - Ständiger Organisationsausschuss der Internationalen Tagungen Katholischer Tiefenpsychologen, the letterhead found in the archives of the A.I.E.M.P.R. displays 'Comité Organisateur Permanent des Congrès Catholiques Internationaux de Psychothérapie et de Psychologie Clinique - Permanent Organizing Committee for International Catholic Congresses on Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology - Ständiger Organisationsausschuss der Internationalen Katholischen Kongresse für Psychotherapie und Klinische Psychologie'. Thus the explicit reference to psychoanalysis was dropped.



in his address: ‘Nobody will deny that there can be, and not seldom is, an irrational feeling of guilt, even a sick one.’<sup>20</sup> The Pope added, of course, that a psychotherapist should be respectful of a real feeling of guilt, but the participants in the congress felt happy. Few people knew that something quite different had happened one or two days earlier. Rome remained awfully Rome. One of the participants in the congress was Marc Oraison, a physician specialised in urology who had been ordained as a priest, and who had just completed his doctoral thesis in theology on Catholic sexual morality.<sup>21</sup> He was called to some bureau in the Vatican. There, two cardinals were waiting for him, one of them being the notorious cardinal Ottaviani. He was informed that his thesis had been put on the *Index*, the list of the forbidden books.<sup>22</sup>

A year later, the famous book by A. Hesnard, *Morale sans Péché*,<sup>23</sup> was published. This book, by a first-generation psychoanalyst<sup>24</sup> who had previously published a textbook on sexology that had been reprinted many times, and a tough *L’univers morbide de la faute*,<sup>25</sup> was meant for a broad audience. It indeed became very successful. Hesnard criticized the Catholic moral theology as being, in fact, anti-moral. Instead of helping people to make their own moral decisions deliberately, Catholic morality provoked anxiety. Catholics had become so afraid of their feelings of guilt that they often preferred not to take any initiative and not to act, rather than risk the torments of their conscience. The emphasis placed by Catholicism on sexual matters was stigmatized as the main mistake in the way Catholicism had perverted the real meaning of moral conscience. Think of the neurotic anxiety of having committed the mortal sin of masturbation! One definitely needed to get rid of this neurotic concern with guilt. Hesnard pleaded for a ‘morality without sin’, a moral conscience directed to what should be done, instead of a complex mechanism serving the egoistic feeling of ‘I have nothing to reproach myself’.

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20. Text in the *Osservatore Romano*, 16 April 1953, and in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 45 (1953), pp.278-286.

21. M. Oraison, *Vie chrétienne et problèmes de la sexualité*, Paris (Letheilleux), 1950. New edition with a foreword by L. Beirnaert: Paris, Fayard, 1970.

22. M. Oraison, *Ce qu’un homme a cru voir. Mémoires posthumes*, Paris, Laffont, 1980, pp.92-93. E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France. II: La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.209-215.

23. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1954.

24. When he was the assistant of E. Régis, he wrote together with his professor the basic book introducing psychoanalysis in France: E. Régis and A. Hesnard, *La psychanalyse des névroses et des psychoses: ses applications médicales et extra-médicales*, Paris, Alcan, 1914. The extensive bibliography at the end is still interesting to have an overview of what was known from Freudian thought in 1914. To quote only a limited part of Hesnard’s further publications: *L’inconscient*, Paris, Doin, 1923; *Les psychoses et les frontières de la folie*, Paris, Flammarion, 1924; *Traité de sexologie normale et pathologique*, Paris, Payot, 1933 (several editions); *Psychanalyse du lien interhumain*, Paris, PUF, 1957; *De Freud à Lacan*, Paris, ESF, 1970, 2nd ed. 1971, 3rd ed. 1977.

25. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1949.

A huge tumult followed and it seemed as if psychoanalysis would be condemned by Rome. After some discussion the organising committee of the congresses on 'Psychiatry and clinical psychology' decided to ask some internationally recognized Catholic psychiatrists for support in the attempt to safeguard a psychological reflection on Catholic morality. Support was given by J. Lopez Ibor, Gr. Zilboorg, H. Ey and Ch. Durand. The last, a Catalan, would become the key figure and soon the president of a society that would become more than an organising committee for annual congresses. The 'Catholic Organisation for the Study of the Relations between Normal Psychology and Psychopathology' was born.<sup>26</sup> Recognition of the psychological and, more especially, of the psychoanalytical approach was, however, not easy to achieve. In 1960, the local synod of the diocese of Rome condemned psychoanalysis: no priest of the diocese of Rome should refer anyone of his parishioners to a psychoanalyst. Many intellectuals were upset and, under the influence of the famous moral theologian B. Häring, an important diplomatic campaign was organised in order not to have that text - which had already been published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* - officially listed in the columns of the *Osservatore Romano*. It was feared that the Catholic Church might condemn psychoanalysis worldwide, but it did not happen. When the Second Vatican Council was announced, new hope arose that, finally, all those upsetting problems on sexual morality would finally be settled. However, the two really hot topics, contraception and celibacy, were subtracted from the council's authority and reserved for a later papal decision. This has finally gone in the completely opposite direction to the one expected: in July 1968, the encyclical *Humanae vitae* reiterated the condemnation of contraception and, in November 1971, the Synod on Priesthood decided on a mandatory maintenance of celibacy.

Thus, for a period of twenty years, from 1948 until 1968, as far as the Catholic world was concerned, psychology was mainly invested in the area of sexual morality, and psychoanalysis was eagerly accepted as an auxiliary. In France and in the Romanic countries in general, psychoanalysis became the cornerstone of pastoral psychology, while Rogers fulfilled this function in the United States of America. Marc Oraison, who had decided not to keep silent

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26. *L'Association Catholique Internationale pour l'Étude des Relations entre la Psychologie Normale et la Psychologie Pathologique*. This association, that dropped the epithet 'Catholic' in 1972, has held congresses every three years, with a few exceptions, right up until the present. In 1957, Madrid: Religious life and mental health; 1960, Milan: Sin and culpability; 1963, Toulouse: Marriage and celibacy; 1966, Louvain: Pastoral relation; 1969, Padua: Types of psychological assistance in the education of priests and monks; 1972, Luxembourg: Faith questioned by human sciences; 1975, Cincinnati: Violence; 1978, Rome: The return of the irrational; 1981, Brussels: Our relation with the institution: neither with nor without; 1986, Barcelona: Science, faith, ethics; 1990, Antwerp: Representing the invisible; 1993, Geneva: Being someone different - fanaticism, integrism, otherness, narcissism; 1996, Louvain-la-Neuve: Anxiety and hope. The theme for the 1999 congress in Rome will be: Certainties and the experience of a limit.

after his Roman meeting with Ottaviani, reached an enormous audience with more than 30 books and numerous articles, many of them having been translated into English, German, Italian, Spanish and Dutch.<sup>27</sup> Considered from a theoretical point of view, they certainly lack accuracy and depth but, at that time, they gave an adequate pastoral answer to people's anxieties. They have undoubtedly contributed to making a psychoanalytic spirit very popular among Catholics in Europe. It is said that even Pope Paul VI read Oraison's book *Morality for our time*, and not without some positive evaluation.<sup>28</sup>

More theoretical depth is to be found in the work of a few theologians who did combine a psychoanalytic point of view with a thorough knowledge of the history of theology and spirituality. The first one to be named is Father Bruno,<sup>29</sup> a carmelite who was interested in mystique from a psychological point of view, and who had already published on this topic in the *Études carmélitaines*<sup>30</sup> prior to the Second World War. In 1948, this review devoted a very interesting and thick issue to *Satan*. Two other pioneers were the jesuit L. Beirnaert (1906-1985)<sup>31</sup> and the Dominican Albert Plé (?-1988).<sup>32</sup> The

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27. Some of his books that have been translated into English: *Union in marital life. Its physical and spiritual foundations*, New York, MacMillan, 1958; *Love or constraint? Some psychological aspects of religious education*, New York, Paulist Press, 1961; *Sin*, New York, MacMillan, 1962; *Love, sin and suffering*, New York, MacMillan, 1964; *Learning and love. Frank advice for young Catholics*, New York, Hawthorn, 1965; *The human mystery of sexuality*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1967; *The celibate condition and sex*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1967; *The harmony of the human couple*, Notre Dame, Fides, 1967; *Morality for our time*, New York, Doubleday, 1968; *Being together. Our relation with other people*, New York, Doubleday, 1970.

28. For the life and work of M. Oraison, I am indebted to the research and interviews carried out by K. Degrauwe for his Master's thesis when he was a student of mine in 1983-84.

29. In those days, it was common for members of a religious congregations to sign their articles with their religious surname only, so that it is not always easy to trace their original name of birth. Time and again, I have to warn students that if so many people have the initials 'R.P.', this is because they are referred to as 'Révérend Père'.

30. In 1926-1927, Janet published the two volumes of his *De l'angoisse à l'extase. Étude sur les croyances et les sentiments*, in which he discusses the famous case of 'Madeleine' and draws conclusions on mysticism in general. In a reaction, Bruno de Jésus-Marie published an article in his *Études carmélitaines* in 1931: 'A propos de la 'Madeleine' de Pierre Janet'. I was not able to perform a further study on this periodical. I would like to mention that a good piece of information on the French psychology of religion stemming from the Charcot tradition is to be found in St. Baeten's doctoral dissertation on multiple personalities in past and present: *Van bezetenheid tot dissociatie. een historische belichting van de huidige therapeutische praktijk* (From Possession to Dissociation. A Historical Reflection on the Current Therapeutical Approach), Doct. Diss. Groningen, 1998.

31. He was the editor of two books on pastoral counselling: *Direction spirituelle et psychologie*, Bruges, Desclée de Brouwer, 1951, and the proceedings of the Louvain congress of the A.I.E.M.P.R. on pastoral relationship (see later): *La relation pastorale*, Paris, Cerf, 1968. The more essential of his numerous articles have been published in *Espérance chrétienne et psychologie*, Paris, Éditions de l'Épi, 1964 and in *Au frontières de l'acte analytique*, Paris, Seuil, 1987, and in *Aux frontières de l'acte analytique. La bible, Saint Ignace, Freud et Lacan*, Paris, Seuil, 1987. On p.246 of this last book, issued two years after his death, some bibliographical dates are given. Very curiously, no reference is made to him in the annual necrology in the

latter published many interesting psychological articles in *La vie spirituelle*. When this had been forbidden by the religious authorities, he obeyed, and cleansed the review of psychological articles; but in 1947 he founded the *Supplément à la vie spirituelle*, where this approach could find refuge.

Under the influence of their personal analysis, many priests decided to live a sexual life, either by entering into marriage or by getting involved in a sexual relationship. Historical research on the history of celibacy and priesthood made it clear that the reasons for the introduction of this practice were very ambiguous: ritual taboos on pollution before the eucharist and the fear that parishes, along with their belongings, would be passed on from father to son as was the case with notaries' offices and chemist's shops.<sup>33</sup> In addition, psychoanalysis made people conscious that they should distinguish their own wishes from other people's. For priests it became clear that their celibacy had nothing to do with a personal vow, but that it was just a law imposed by others (the *lex continentiae*), and that one could question the legitimate character of this law. As to the religious life in religious congregations where there was a vow of chastity, the same Church history showed an even more puzzling ambiguous motivation at its origin, as ascetic monarchism and sexual renunciation pretended to replace the ideal of the martyr.<sup>34</sup> A heavy critique of the spirituality of priesthood and monastic life surfaced.<sup>35</sup> The experiment by G. Lemerrier, a Belgian who became prior of a Benedictine monastery near Guernavaca (Mexico) and decided, at the beginning of the sixties, to introduce psychoanalytically inspired group therapy for the community, was met with suspicion by the Roman authorities, but with much interest from

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*Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu* of 1986, while a whole page has been devoted to M. de Certeau in the 1987 edition, p.44. A few data are given by E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, p.211.

32. Two of his articles on sexuality have been republished in the journal *Le Supplément* which he had founded: 'La vertu de chasteté' (1st ed.: 1956) and 'Sexualité et culpabilité' (1st ed.: 1965) (*Le Supplément* 1988, pp.9-118). He gave a comprehensive statement of his view on morals in his book *Par devoir ou par plaisir?* Paris, Cerf, 1980. Some biographical notes are to be found in G. Rossi, 'Albert Plé: Una vita dedicata al dialogo tra teologia e psicanalisi', *La civiltà cattolica* 139 (1988) nr.4, pp.454-465.

33. R. Gryson, *Les origines du célibat ecclésiastique*, Gembloux, Duculot, 1970.

34. I have put the basic texts together in my book *Passie en beschouwing. De christelijke invloed op het westerse mensbeeld* (*Passion and Contemplation. The Christian Influence on Western Conception of Man*), Louvain, Peeters, 1988. Unfortunately, I was unable to make use of the rich insights of a classic book that appeared simultaneously: P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, London, Faber & Faber, 1988.

35. M. Bellet, *La peur ou la foi: une analyse du prêtre*, Bruges, Desclée de Brouwer, 1967. (Italian: *La paura o la fede: analisi del prete*, Roma, Ed. Paoline, 1968). See also a personal document issued by a well-known French psychoanalyst: G. Bonnet, *Pourquoi je pars. Un prêtre en psychanalyse*, 2nd ed., 1969.

many participants at the Vatican Council.<sup>36</sup> When it became clear that the Roman authorities would stick to the traditional sexual standard (as it became clear in the 1971 decision on the celibacy of priesthood and in the 1975 statement accepting homosexuality as a given fact, but not as a human possibility that could be actualized), many priests left their office. Some of them became psychoanalysts, as this practice appeared to them to be quite in consonance with the way they would have liked to exercise priesthood. As Lacan differed from the *International Psychoanalytical Association* (IPA) in making no problems of candidates who were not physicians when accepting them for psychoanalytical training, and because he favoured a conjunction between psychoanalysis and the humanities, they mainly became members of his School.

### **The importance of Lacan**

Authority, sex and guilt: the emphasis Catholicism had laid on those topics over the last few centuries explains why psychoanalysis was so eagerly adopted by Catholics. In France, theology became involved in the Lacanian debate. An important shift resulted from this. Lacan's introduction of the concept of 'symbolic order' led to a reflection upon religious language. His concern for linking psychoanalysis with philosophy was on the same track as Catholic theology, which has always advocated a philosophical basis and insisted upon the fundamental value of 'natural theology'. Lacan's insistence in his later work that the awareness of something metaphysical or absolute belongs to the core of psychoanalytic practice revived interest in mystique. From the midst of several authors involved in this debate, three important names emerge: Antoine Vergote, Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Pohier.

But let us start by naming some landmarks. Jacques Lacan was, and still is, a very controversial individual. Hated, or at least considered to be a fool by some, he is adored as a magnificent master by others. But in the period we are dealing with, shortly after the Second World War, he was simply one of the most brilliant and noticeable members of the *Société Psychanalytique de Paris*, of which he was the president at the moment that it entered into conflict with the IPA in 1953.

The issue at stake was that of the training of analysts. A very strict programme had been established and this was experienced by many candidates as being too much of a school programme. They also protested against the very severe control on the way the training analysis was realised. After a heavy polemic, the larger part of the members decided to leave the *Société*

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36. E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, p.217. See also G. Lemerrier & F. Verny, *Dialogues avec le Christ*, Paris, Grasset, 1966.

*Psychanalytique de Paris*, which was a part of the IPA, and they founded the *Société Française de Psychanalyse*. Lacan soon joined them. To manifest its existence on the international forum, the new society held a congress in Rome on 26 and 27 September 1953. There Lacan delivered his programmatic lecture *Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse*.<sup>37</sup>

In this essential text, Lacan emphasises the fact that the ego is always a split ego, which has the tendency to forget this intrinsic split by constructing, in a narcissistic way, an image of the own self in conformity with other people's expectations. The so-called orthodox technique of frustration-aggression-regression, adopted by the IPA in order to reinforce the 'ego', actually means a further occultation of the internal split and a further alienation of the human subject. This direct critique of H. Hartmann and his ego-psychology is based upon Lacan's conception that, in fact, the 'I' proceeds from the impact of language upon a psyche that is in the process of growing up. The identity at which one narcissistically lingers is the effect of what one has heard from others, but many parts of what has been said have undergone censorship. Lacan introduces his well known formulation: 'the unconscious is the discourse of the other'. Thus, instead of focusing on the stages in instinctual maturation that should be worked through in order to reinforce the ability of the ego to cope with frustration - the technique advocated by the IPA - the analysis should stick to what the analysand says and carefully detect the blanks appearing in his or her discourse. According to Lacan, only in this way can psychoanalysis produce a true word, *une parole pleine*.<sup>38</sup>

After these statements, aimed at defending his own praxis against that advocated by the IPA, he further questions why the very concrete words picked up by a child are so important in the construction of the image of one's own self. He introduces the themes that will shape his theory: the importance of the name of the father and of the symbolic order. When we try to summarize those themes as he developed them in the first years of his teaching, we arrive at the following picture. The separation of the mother is the essential pivot.<sup>39</sup> Developing Kleinian concepts further, he insists on the fact that the father plays an essential role in the process of separation from the

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37. In J. Lacan, *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, pp.237-322. Engl. tr.: *The Language of the Self. The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1968; 2nd ed.: *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1976.

38. The text was too lengthy to be read in its entirety, but it was available, and an important discussion arose. See E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.257-280.

39. In the English literature, the 'separation phase' is mostly credited to M. Mahler. Actually, Lacan had already introduced the theme in France at the end of the fifties. Anyone doubting this can read the testimony of M. Foucault about this. See his article 'Le «non» du père' of 1962 (reprint in M. Foucault, *Dits et Écrits*, vol. 1, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, p.199).

mother. In fact, his role is a double one, and the duality of his functions is often too easily overlooked by those who see him only as a 'frustrator'. Of course, there is a negative side to the father, as he confronts the child with the fact that its mother is not only interested in its majesty. There is, however, also a positive side to this. The father imposes an identity on the child by giving him or her a name and introducing the child to what Lacan calls 'the symbolic order'. In so far as the father is understood as a father-figure, a representative of further authority, and in so far as he represents more than the particularity of his individual being, his symbolic presence introduces the child into a cultural world in which human desires seek fulfilment in a symbolic way. These two sides, the negative and the positive, are to be found in Lacan's play on words: 'Le «nom» du père est en même temps le «non» du père', the name of the father is at the same time the 'no' of the father.<sup>40</sup>

One sees what was interesting for theologians in this theory: the emphasis upon language as an autonomous reality to which the psyche should submit itself in order to escape from psychosis. A psychological reflection upon the religious meaning of the authority of the Word and on belief in revelation could proceed from here. Actually, as we shall see further on, this will be the way Lacanian thought will remove theological reflection from a narrow concern with sexual morality and bring it to a reflection on the formulations of religious creeds about God.

What could appear as being only a curious anecdote should be mentioned here. During the congress in Rome, Lacan was extremely eager to have a private audience with the Pope, whom he called the 'common father'.<sup>41</sup> He was anxious to convince him that psychoanalysis was of extreme importance for Christianity. In order to obtain this audience, he appealed to the influence not only of his brother, who was a Benedictine, but also to that of the French embassy, without success however. The famous lecture on the *Fonction et champ de la parole* opens with a reference to the Vatican hill, in the form of an etymology which links 'Vatican' with the Latin verb *vagire*, the first crying of the baby and, thus, the origin of speech. To complete this *petite histoire*, we should narrate that Lacan, not having succeeded in obtaining his private audience, wanted to go to a public one, which he actually did in company of S. Leclair and the previously mentioned Maryse Choisy.

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40. Lacan was well aware that his view could very well fit into the views of Winnicott, as becomes manifest in a letter written to him on 5 August 1960 and published in *October: Art, Theory, Criticism, Politics*, vol. 40 (1987), pp.76-78: 'And yet how I do feel myself supported by and in agreement with your enquiries, in their content and in their style. Does not the "transitional object", all of whose merits I have shown to those close to me, indicate the site at which, precociously, that distinction of desire in relation to need is marked?' (p.78).

41. E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.272-273; E. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan. Esquisse d'une vie, histoire d'un système de pensée*, Paris, Fayard, 1993, pp.274-275.

But back to the psychoanalytic politics going on in that period. The psychoanalysts who had left the *Société Psychanalytique de Paris* in 1953 and had joined the *Société Française de Psychanalyse* had not realised that, by doing so, they had lost their membership of the IPA. When this became clear, they asked for official recognition of their new society as a new branch of the IPA. A committee composed of Ph. Greenacre, R. Eissler, W. Hoffer and J. Lampl de Groot - who is said to have been the most stubborn on the matter of analytical orthodoxy - and with D. Winnicott, as president, was sent to Paris in October 1953 in order to investigate the orthodoxy of psychoanalytic practice and training in Paris. The next month, on 18 November, Lacan started his famous Seminars. He took Freud's writings on analytical technique<sup>42</sup> as the topic for the first year (1954-55). The next topics would be on the ego in Freud's theory and practice (1954-55),<sup>43</sup> on 'Freudian structures in the psychoses' (1955-56),<sup>44</sup> and then on 'the object-relations and Freudian structures' (1956-57).<sup>45</sup> The emphasis on the term 'Freudian structures', which has mostly been skipped in the titles of the published texts, should not be overlooked: the link between psychoanalysis and structuralism is being established here.

This is where A. Vergote comes in. Being a priest of the diocese of Bruges (Belgium), he had been sent to Louvain University in order to study Philosophy and Theology. He completed both in brilliant style, obtaining a doctorate in both disciplines: in Theology in 1951, on the theme of testimony in the gospel of John<sup>46</sup>, and in Philosophy in 1954, on the concept of the will in Aquinas<sup>47</sup>. Nothing particularly predisposed Vergote to become a psychologist of religion. He had followed the very common path that Belgian dioceses, and Bruges in particular, were accustomed to follow: sending the

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42. *Les écrits techniques de Freud*, Paris, Seuil, 1975. Engl. tr.: *Freud's Papers on Technique*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

43. *Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse (1954-1955)*, Paris, Seuil, 1978; Engl. tr.: *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

44. *Les psychoses 1955-1956*, Paris, Seuil, 1981; *The Psychoses*, London, Routledge and Kegan, 1993.

45. *La relation d'objet*, Paris, Seuil, 1994.

46. In Louvain, it is not usual to have the whole dissertation published. Only a part of it or a synopsis is normally published. Vergote wrote an article on the representation of the crucifixion in the gospel of John. He shows that the crucifixion is actually depicted by John as an exaltation: not the miserable end of the man Jesus, but already the manifestation of his deity: 'L'exaltation du Christ en croix selon le quatrième évangile', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 28 (1952), pp.5-23.

47. *Het wilsrealisme in de filosofie van Thomas van Aquino: studie van Thomas' wilsfilosofie in de thema's van het transcendentiaal goede, de streving en de liefde (The reality of the will according to Aquinas. A study of St. Thomas's philosophy of the will considered in the themes of the transcendental good, the pursuit and the love)*, Doct. Fil., Louvain, Institute for Philosophy, 228pp., 1954



best pupils to the university for a part of their study, often, but not always, Philosophy and Theology. There were many priest candidates in those days, and priests were not confined to pastoral work: there were many other positions in Catholic institutions in which a priest could take a central position: teaching in secondary schools, management of Catholic social organizations, Catholic universities. Thus bishops could very well employ academically trained priests, to whom they did not automatically give an appointment in the direct continuation of the course of study. Academic training was then considered to be a basic training directed towards the person of the student, and not, as is unfortunately the case nowadays, towards the job requirements of the market.

So, after his study, Vergote was waiting for the future that the bishop's mind would plan for him. The borrowing of a bicycle from the Louvain Professor of Psychology, J. Nuttin, himself also a priest of the diocese of Bruges, had an unexpected effect. Nuttin, who was one of the first Catholic professors of psychology to devote a book to Freud and psychoanalysis,<sup>48</sup> was looking for a young academic able to go deeper into the domain of psychology of religion.<sup>49</sup> Nuttin asked if Vergote was interested in the psychology of religion and, if this was the case, he would request the bishop's agreement and would organise matters so that he could immediately start on some lectures on the topic: that was the best way to become acquainted with the new topic. Vergote accepted, but insisted upon the fact of having the opportunity for further study. An agreement was reached and, finally, as Paris is not that far from Louvain and there are good trains, Vergote went for psychoanalytic training to Paris in 1955. There he would attend Lacan's seminars from 1955 to 1958 and perform didactic analysis with him. Very soon, he wrote some important articles on psychoanalysis and phenomenology

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48. This book has been very influential, with many editions and translations. We could trace: J. Nuttin, *Psychoanalyse en spiritualistische opvatting van de mens*, Antwerp, Standaard, 1949; Engl. tr.: *Psychoanalysis and Personality. A Dynamic Theory of Normal Personality*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1954; German tr.: *Psychoanalyse und personalistische Auffassung vom Menschen*, Freiburg (Swiss), Universitätsverlag, 1956; Ital. tr.: *Psicanalisi e Personalità*, Alba (Cuneo), Ed. Paoline, 3th ed.: 1960; Portug. tr.: *Psicanalisi e Personalità*, Rio de Janeiro, Agir, 1955; Spanish tr.: *Psicoanálisis y concepción espiritualista del hombre*, Madrid, Bibliotheca Nueva, 1956. Although most of his subsequent publications have little to do with the psychology of religion, he is also known for his adaptations of the M.M.P.I. for the selection of priest candidates: *Examen de la personnalité chez des candidats à la prêtrise: adaptation du test de la personnalité M.M.P.I.*, Louvain, Publications Universitaires, 1956. Spanish translation: *Examen de la personalidad en los candidatos al sacerdocio: adaptación del test de personalidad MMPI*, Madrid, Razón, 1966.

49. Nuttin also took part, in Mendola (Italy) on 19-20 July 1956, in the decisive meeting of the Permanent Organizing Committee for International Catholic Congresses of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology where the establishment of an association was determined: Archives of the A.I.E.M.P.R., document on preparation for the Congress of 10-15 September 1957 in Madrid.

and on the theory of symbolism.<sup>50</sup> Vergote recalls that Ricoeur said to him that it was when reading one of these articles that he became aware of the real value of psychoanalysis. He realised that psychoanalysis referred to more than the area of guilt that he was then unravelling, as we shall see.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1954, the committee presided over by Winnicott had concluded that the new *Société Française de Psychanalyse* did not meet the requirements for recognition by the IPA. After years and years of diplomacy, the question of recognition was again placed on the agenda, and the condition imposed by the IPA was the exclusion, initially, of A. Berge, F. Dolto and J. Lacan, and later of J. Lacan alone, at least in so far as their recognition as didactic analysts was concerned.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Lacan continued his seminars: on the Unconscious in 1957-58,<sup>53</sup> on Desire and Interpretation in 1958-59,<sup>54</sup> and the famous one on the Ethics of Psychoanalysis in 1959-60.<sup>55</sup> Lots of things were brewing in the French intellectual climate in this period. Psychoanalysis was occupying a central position in the humanities to an ever-increasing extent, and very soon structuralism joined it. A central pivot in the ongoing evolution was the *Colloque de Bonneval* on the Unconscious in 1960. Lacan, Ricoeur and Vergote were there in the midst of many celebrities. Lacan was still at the centre of the polemic with the IPA and he was certainly seeking support and recognition. Organised Lacanism would soon be born: when the majority of the board of the *Société Française de Psychanalyse* accepted, in 1963, the ultimatum of the IPA and expelled Lacan as didactic analyst, the latter set up his own school, the *École Freudienne de Paris*, in 1964. It was precisely in those critical years that Lacan hoped that P. Ricoeur would provide a philosophical guarantee for his own position.

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50. A. Vergote, 'Psychanalyse et phénoménologie', in M. Raclot (ed.), *Problèmes de psychanalyse*, (Recherches et débats nr 21), Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1957, pp.125-144. Eng. tr.: 'Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology', in M. Raclot (ed.), *Problems in Psychoanalysis*, Baltimore, Helicon Press, 1961, pp.139-160. 'L'intérêt philosophique de la psychanalyse freudienne', *Archives de philosophie* 1958, 21, pp.26-59. Eng. tr.: 'Philosophy's Interest in Psychoanalysis', *Philosophy Today*, 1958, 2, pp.253-273. 'Le symbole', *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 1959, 57, pp.197-224. Eng. tr.: 'The symbol', *Philosophy Today* 1960, 4, pp.53-72.

51. Fr. Dosse, *Paul Ricoeur. Le sens d'une vie*, Paris, La découverte, 1997, pp.321-323.

52. E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.236-377. The committee of the IPA was also reluctant to accept pupils analyzed by A. Hesnard, as this analyst of the elder generation had not undergone didactic analysis himself.

53. *Les formations de l'inconscient* (not published yet).

54. *Le désir et son interprétation* (not published yet).

55. *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, Paris, Seuil, 1986. Eng. tr.: *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, New York, Norton, 1992.

### Paul Ricoeur and the problem of the free will

Paul Ricoeur was born in 1913 into a Protestant family in Valence, Provence.<sup>56</sup> As his mother died very soon after his birth, and his father was killed in the First World War, he was brought up by his grandparents in Rennes. In the final year of his secondary school, the previously mentioned Roland Dalbiez, author of the book on Freud, was his teacher of philosophy. Ricoeur was deeply impressed by his teachings, which opposed the current idealistic views espousing the viewpoint that consciousness was able to grasp itself. Ricoeur continued to study philosophy at the University of Rennes and then became acquainted with Gabriel Marcel. He started his career as a teacher of philosophy in secondary schools. Then the Second World War came. Ricoeur joined the French army and was taken prisoner by the Germans. He spent those five years studying German philosophy and making a translation of the first volume of the *Ideen* by E. Husserl.<sup>57</sup> When the war was over, he applied Husserl's phenomenology in his doctoral dissertation on the human will, *Philosophie de la volonté* (1949).<sup>58</sup> The topic reflects the fact that Ricoeur is a Protestant. The doctoral dissertation was imbedded in a broader project. He wanted to perform a philosophical enquiry into the *servum arbitrium*, the enslaved will, the cornerstone of Protestant doctrine. Making use of Husserl's method of 'eidetic reduction', he tried to capture the real core of the human will in the midst of the multiplicity of empirical phenomena.

Ricoeur refers in his doctoral dissertation - rather briefly - to psychoanalysis. In his view, the core of psychoanalysis lies in the process of gaining consciousness. He insists upon the fact that the unconscious does not bring the conscious into discredit, on the contrary. Due to the interpretation given by the psychoanalyst, the unconscious character of a representation is removed. Ricoeur considers psychoanalysis as a technique that broadens the field of consciousness.<sup>59</sup>

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56. The biographical material is to be found in P. Ricoeur, *Réflexion faite. Autobiographie intellectuelle*, Paris, Esprit, 1995; P. Ricoeur, *La critique et la conviction. Entretien avec François Azouvi et Marc de Launay*, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 1995; Fr. Dosse, *Paul Ricoeur. Le sens d'une vie*, Paris, La Découverte, 1997.

57. E. Husserl, *Idees directrices pour une phénoménologie*, Translation, introduction and commentary by P. Ricoeur, Paris, Gallimard, 1950.

58. The undated dissertation was printed in 1949, the defense occurred on 29 April 1950. The translation of Husserl was accepted as the complementary dissertation (*Thèse complémentaire*), and that book was actually printed in January 1950, and not in 1949 as indicated in the main dissertation.

59. 'Mais le facteur décisif de la cure est la réintégration du souvenir dans le champ de conscience. Là est le coeur de la psychanalyse. Loin donc que la psychanalyse soit une négation de la conscience, elle est au contraire un *moyen d'étendre le champ de conscience d'une volonté possible* par dissolution des contractures affectives.' (italics by Ricoeur) P. Ricoeur, *Philosophie de la volonté*. Vol. I: *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, Paris, Aubier, 1949, pp.360-361.

According to the original plan, *Philosophie de la volonté* was to be followed by two other books. Firstly, the limits of the will would be considered: not only those resulting from the dark knots between body and mind, but also those stemming from intrinsic conflicts within the will itself. Secondly, a 'poetics' of the will would be written, a description or evocation of the way the will can be liberated from its own slavery. The latter book has never actually appeared. As to the previous one: Ricoeur wrestled with it for a long time, and finally it fell apart into two volumes: one dealing with the primal symbols of Evil, and the other dealing with the myths on the Beginning and on the End.<sup>60</sup> Thus, ultimately, there were three books, but the one that had been announced as the third was missing - something that passed unnoticed in many translations.<sup>61</sup>

What had happened? During his writing, Ricoeur encountered a problem he felt unable to solve easily. It appeared that the experiences of the limitation of inner freedom are usually expressed in mythological language, and that it is very tricky to have this language translated into clear concepts. Ricoeur experienced the need for a reliable hermeneutic of these myths, and this hermeneutic was understood by him as an interpretation of the central symbols used by those myths. That was the way he became interested in psychoanalysis, as psychoanalysis appeared to him to be the discipline *par excellence* to uncover the hidden meaning of symbols. Another fact activating his interest in psychoanalysis was the request to review the previously mentioned two books by A. Hesnard, *L'univers morbide de la faute* (1949) and *Morale sans péché* (1954).

Although not a Catholic, Ricoeur thus became involved in the Catholic discussion on guilt. One can actually notice that in his book on the enslaved will, biblical stories on the feeling of guilt occupy a rather important place. Ricoeur is conscious of the fact that his text reflects a tension between the rational, philosophical style of his doctoral dissertation and his attempt to evoke, by means of symbols, the real experience of guilt. Is it possible to construct a bridge between rational reflection and the world opened by the

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60. P. Ricoeur, *Finitude et culpabilité*. Deel 1: *L'homme faillible*, Paris, Aubier, 1960; deel 2: *La symbolique du mal*, Paris, Aubier, 1960. The first part of *Finitude and Guilt* has been translated as *Fallible Man*, Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1965; the second part as *The Symbolism of Evil*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967.

61. The same can be said about the translations of Foucault's books on sexuality: volume 1, *La volonté de savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976 (Engl. tr.: *The History of Sexuality*, New York, Vintage Books, 1980) was intended as the introduction to a quite different series of books than those that are often presented as Volumes 2 and 3, namely *L'usage des plaisirs*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984 (Engl. tr.: *The Use of Pleasure*, New York, Vintage Books, 1986) and *Le souci de soi*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984 (Engl. tr.: *The Care of the Self*, New York, Vintage Books, 1988). The original project of the *Histoire de la sexualité* intended the production of the following volumes: 1. La volonté de savoir; 2. La chair et le corps; 3. Le croisade des enfants; 4. La femme, la mère et l'hystérique; 5. Les pervers; 6. Populations et races.

symbol? Ricoeur believes that it is. The famous and often-quoted text by Ricoeur on the 'seconde naïveté' is to be found at the end of the second volume of *Finitude et culpabilité*: (II: La symbolique du mal), dating from 1960. There, he expresses this confidence with the famous formulation: '*Le symbole donne à penser*' - 'The symbol gives rise to thought'. According to his own words, he was found of the formulation. Thinking thus begins with what, at the outset, is only delivered through symbols.<sup>62</sup> Ricoeur refers hereby to Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Dilthey, but also to more recent writers such as Leenhardt, van der Leeuw, Éliade, Jung, and Bultmann. He says that he has been deeply inspired by the last-named author's article on 'The problem of hermeneutics' in *Glauben und Verstehen*.<sup>63</sup> He is convinced that hermeneutics, although a modern acquisition, can bring man back to the sacred. Ricoeur refers to this recovery of the sacred as the 'second naïveté'.<sup>64</sup>

This formulation became immediately popular and was eagerly adopted in theological and pastoral circles, together with a sentence by André Malraux: '*Le prochain siècle sera mystique ou ne sera pas*' - 'The next century will be mystical or it will simply not exist'. The all-too-easy way churches looked for

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62. '... "Le symbole donne à penser." Cette sentence qui m'enchantait dit deux choses: le symbole donne; mais ce qu'il donne, c'est à penser, de quoi penser.

Le symbole donne: une philosophie instruite par les mythes survient à un certain moment de la réflexion, et, par-delà la réflexion philosophique, elle veut répondre à une certaine situation de la culture moderne.

Le recours à l'archaïque, au nocturne, à l'onirique, qui est aussi, comme le dit Bachelard dans la *La poétique de l'espace*, un accès au point de naissance du langage, représente une tentative pour échapper aux difficultés du commencement radical en philosophie. Le commencement n'est pas ce qu'on trouve d'abord; il faut accéder au point de départ; il faut le conquérir. La compréhension des symboles peut appartenir au mouvement en direction du point de départ; car pour accéder au commencement, il faut d'abord que la pensée habite dans le plein du langage.'

The English translation of this central text is as follows:

"The symbol gives rise to thought". That sentence, which enchants me, says two things: the symbol gives; but what it gives is occasion for thought, something to think about.

The symbol gives: a philosophy instructed by myths arises at a certain moment in reflection, and, beyond philosophical reflection, it wishes to provide an answer to a certain situation of modern culture.

Recourse to the archaic, to the nocturnal, the oneiric, which is also, as Bachelard says in his *Poétique de l'espace*, a way of approaching the birthplace of language, represents an attempt to escape the difficulties of a radical beginning in philosophy. The beginning is not what one finds first; the point of departure must be reached, it must be won. Understanding of symbols can play a part in the movement towards the point of departure; for, if the beginning is to be reached, it is first necessary for thought to inhabit the fullness of language.' P. Ricoeur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, Vol. 1: *La symbolique du mal*, Paris, Aubier, 1960, p.324; Eng. tr. p.348.

63. *Ibid.*, pp.326-327.

64. 'Ainsi l'herméneutique, acquisition de la "modernité", est un des modes par lesquels cette "modernité" se surmonte en tant qu'oubli du sacré. Je crois que l'être peut encore me parler, non plus sans doute sous la forme précritique de la croyance immédiate, mais comme le second immédiat visé par l'herméneutique. Cette seconde naïveté veut être l'équivalent post-critique de la hiérophanie pré-critique.' *Ibid.*, p.327.

relief in those sentences at the moment their institutions were being shaken by the process of secularisation irritated B. Willaert, one of my teachers, so much that he used to apply Matth. 12, 43-45 to the theme of the second naïveté: 'When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it walks over the deserts seeking a resting place; and finding none. It says, "I will go back to the home I left"; and so it returns and finds the house unoccupied, swept clean, and tidy. Off it goes and collects seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they all come in and settle down: and in the end the man's plight is worse than before. That is how it will be ... with the second naïveté.'

What is now this second naïveté, so much celebrated by some, but also, and not without reason, met with suspicion by others? When one limits the reading of Ricoeur to selected passages from the ten concluding pages of the second volume of *Finitude et culpabilité*, one can draw the following picture. There was a time when human beings were still connected to the sacred, with a fullness of meaning which conveyed itself to the human ear in the richness of the symbolic language. The necessity of mastering nature and getting a technical grip on reality resulted in the fact that an unequivocal meaning was imposed upon words, and that language lost its polysemy and its power to evoke the sacred in which human existence is imbedded. The following passage taken from Ricoeur's text can be considered:<sup>65</sup>

'The historical moment of the philosophy of symbols is that of forgetfulness and restoration. Forgetfulness of hierophanies, forgetfulness of the signs of the sacred, loss of man himself in so far as he belongs to the sacred. The forgetfulness, we know, is the counterpart of the great task of nourishing men, of satisfying their needs by mastering nature through a planetary technique. It is in the age when our language has become more precise, more univocal, more technical in a word, more suited to those integral formalizations which are called precisely symbolic logic, it is in this very age of discourse that we want to recharge our language, that we want to start again for the fullness of language.'

There are clearly Heideggerian reminiscences in this text, and I can imagine that people who nowadays stress Winnicott's transitional sphere in the

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65. 'Le moment historique de la philosophie du symbole, c'est celui de l'oubli et de la restauration. Oubli des hiérophanies, oubli des signes du sacré, perte de l'homme lui-même en tant qu'il appartient au sacré. Cet oubli, nous le savons, est la contrepartie de la tâche grandiose de nourrir les hommes, de satisfaire les besoins en maîtrisant la nature par une technique planétaire. C'est à l'époque où notre langage se fait plus précis, plus univoque, plus technique en un mot, plus apte à ces formalisations intégrales qui s'appellent précisément logique symbolique, c'est à cette même époque du discours que nous voulons recharger notre langage, que nous voulons repartir du plein du langage.' Origin. Fr. p.324-325; Eng. tr. p.349.

psychoanalytical approach to religion could be very happy with this portion of Ricoeur's text. But it is only a portion, and even when we limit our attention to that portion we should be aware that, when introducing the theme of the second naiveté, Ricoeur warns us immediately that there is no way back to the first naiveté. The restoration of the full meaning of language and of the power of the symbol can only be achieved by taking an active position of ongoing interpretation.<sup>66</sup>

'But what the symbol gives rise to is thinking. After the gift, positing. The aphorism suggests at the same time that everything has already been said enigmatically and yet that it is always necessary to begin everything and to begin it again in the dimension of thinking. It is this articulation of thought given to itself in the realm of symbols and of thought positing and thinking that constitutes the critical point of our whole enterprise.'

Thus what Ricoeur advocates is not that, after a phase of critical reflection, we adopt a mood of happy relativizing, buying CDs with organ music or Gregorian chant, now and then going back to church not only for the children, but for the aesthetic value of the solemn Catholic mass... Regardless of how interesting this way of relating to religion might be from a psychological point of view, this is not the second naiveté Ricoeur has in mind. There is nothing of Proust in his theory: there is no happy way back to childhood, there is only the ongoing task of interpreting the past. The second naiveté is the compelling need for adopting, time and again, an active position in a continuous hermeneutic of the past:<sup>67</sup>

'Does that mean that we could go back to primitive naiveté? Not at all. In every way, something has been lost, irremediably lost: immediacy of belief. But if we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naiveté in and through criticism. In short, it is by

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66. 'Mais ce que le symbole donne, c'est à penser. À partir de la donation, la position. L'aphorisme suggère à la fois que tout est déjà dit en énigme et pourtant qu'il faut toujours recommencer et recommencer dans la dimension du penser. C'est cette articulation de la pensée donnée à elle-même au royaume des symboles et de la pensée posante et pensante qui constitue le point critique de toute notre entreprise.' Origin. Fr. p.325; Engl. tr. p.349.

67. 'Est-ce à dire que nous pourrions revenir à la première naïveté? non point. De toute manière quelque chose est perdu: l'immédiateté de la croyance. Mais si nous ne pouvons plus vivre, selon la croyance ordinaire, les grandes symboliques du sacré, nous pouvons, nous modernes, dans et par la critique, tendre vers une seconde naïveté. Bref, c'est en *interprétant* que nous pouvons à nouveau *entendre*; ainsi est-ce dans l'herméneutique que se noue la donation de sens par le symbole et l'initiative intelligible du déchiffrement.' Origin. Fr. p.326; Engl. tr. p.351.

*interpreting* that we can *hear* again. Thus it is in hermeneutics that the symbol's gift of meaning and the endeavor to understand by deciphering are knotted together.'

I do not think that this is the second naiveté many church-leaders really want. But back to Ricoeur. How should we conceive this ongoing process of interpretation that is the core of the second naiveté? Ricoeur announced that his answer would be presented in the third volume of *Finitude et culpabilité*, which did not actually appear. The reason is that Ricoeur became aware of the structuralist critique of the comparative method he had been using in the style of the phenomenology of religion according to Van der Leeuw and Eliade. The work of Claude Lévy-Strauss became very influential in the sixties with *La pensée sauvage* (1962) and *Le cru et le cuit* (1964). Structuralism invaded linguistics, and that led to very specific studies on the metaphoric character of language in general. So the categories of symbolic/real could no longer be regarded as simple alternatives, and demanded a more detailed analysis of what language performed. This insight was corroborated by what Ricoeur learned, despite an enormous amount of irritation, from Lacan. They would meet in 1960, in Bonneval. Meanwhile, Ricoeur started to study Freud in more depth. From 1958 onwards, Ricoeur devoted a part of his lectures at the Sorbonne to Freud.

### **Ricoeur and Lacan**

Lacan had always been interested in philosophy. It is said that, when he was fourteen, he discovered Spinoza and decorated his room with a comprehensive self-made scheme of the *Ethica*. Then, in his last year at secondary school, he was deeply influenced by his teacher of philosophy, Jean Baruzzi, who was working on his doctoral thesis on Saint John of the Cross at that time. Lacan, who had grown up in a pretty devout Catholic milieu, became aware of the intellectual side of Catholicism and realised that religion was not only a motive for devotion, but also an instrument for understanding culture. When he read Nietzsche (in German!) at the age of twenty-four, he definitively gave up the belief of his youth, and he found it very sad that he could not prevent his younger brother becoming a Benedictine monk. Yet he kept up his interest in religion as part of Western culture.

Philosophy, however, was more important. Although he studied medicine, he was acquainted with the Marxist interpretation of Hegel adopted by Koyré and Koyève. He became friends with M. Merleau-Ponty and this friendship lasted until the latter's death. He had also personal ties with Cl. Lévi-Strauss and, not to forget, with G. Bataille, as he lived with and finally married the latter's wife after their divorce - a fact that did not obscure the



relationship between the two men. But all those philosophers finally remained at a distance to Lacan's work. At crucial moments in his life, Lacan tried to get in contact with other philosophers, obviously needing their authority as a backing for his own theories.

Jean Hyppolite was the first philosopher with whom Lacan co-operated for a while. Hyppolite followed Lacan's Seminar of 1954-55 on the Ego in Freud's theory and in psychoanalytical technique, and took part in the discussion on the concept of 'Negation' (*Verneinung*) in Freud.<sup>68</sup>

Next came Martin Heidegger. Lacan paid him a visit at Freiburg at Easter 1955 and invited him to his country house for the following summer on the occasion of the colloquium in Cerisy-la-Salle at which Heidegger delivered the lecture 'Was ist das, Philosophie?'<sup>69</sup> On this occasion, Lacan asked Heidegger for permission to translate into French his text 'Logos', a commentary on Heraclitus. Heidegger agreed and thus Lacan became the translator of the first text by Heidegger to be published in French.<sup>70</sup> Despite this, Lacan did not succeed in arousing Heidegger's interest in his own thought.<sup>71</sup>

The relationship with Ricoeur would last longer and, even if it ended in mutual bitterness, it was surely important to both of them. Ricoeur realised that the comparative method and the theory of symbols used by him in his *Finitude et culpabilité* was desperately obsolete.

Lacan and Ricoeur met in 1960, the same year in which the two volumes of *Finitude et culpabilité* were published, at the already mentioned colloquium on the Unconscious in Bonneval. It was organised by the psychiatrist H. Ey, who managed to bring together supporters of the two opposing French psychoanalytical schools, offering them a neutral terrain where they could meet. In addition to Ricoeur, a whole series of psychoanalysts and philosophers were among the speakers.<sup>72</sup> Lacan did not speak but was listed as a discussant, just like J. Hyppolite, M. Merleau-Ponty

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68. Hyppolite's commentary in the *Seminar* of Lacan is to be found in the latter's *Écrits*, pp.879-887.

69. E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.308-310; E. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan. Esquisse d'une vie, histoire d'un système de pensée*, Paris, Fayard, 1993, pp.299-306.

70. Only the first part of Heidegger's text was actually published in *La Psychanalyse* 1 (1956), pp.52-79. See E. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan. Esquisse d'une vie, histoire d'un système de pensée*, Paris, Fayard, 1993, pp.300-306.

71. E. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan. Esquisse d'une vie, histoire d'un système de pensée*, Paris, Fayard, 1993, p.299.

72. H. Ey, Cl. Blanc, R. Diatkine, S. Follin, A. Green, G.C. Lairy, G. Lantéri-Laura, J. Laplanche, S. Lébovici, S. Leclaire, H. Lefebvre, F. Perrier, C. Stein and A. de Waelhens.

and E. Minkowski.<sup>73</sup> At the end of the colloquium, Lacan offered Ricoeur a lift in his car back to Paris, and the former proposed that the latter should participate in his Seminar. Ricoeur accepted, and actually constrained himself to be there for a few years, becoming more and more irritated and having the impression of understanding nothing. At the same time, Ricoeur's son Jean-Paul became fascinated by Lacanism, read Freud on his own and started analysis with a Lacanian analyst. Ricoeur became increasingly puzzled. He talked a lot with the adherents of the opposite branch of French psychoanalysis, went to Yale in 1961 and, in 1962, to Louvain to lecture on Freud. There he talked a lot with A. Vergote and A. de Waelhens, who were supporters of Lacan. Stoically, he continued to show up when Lacan was delivering some of his most important Seminars: on transference (1960-1961),<sup>74</sup> on identification (1961-1962), on anxiety (1962-1963). He was probably also present at a part of the Seminar on the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis (1963-1964).<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, Ricoeur continued to work on his book on Freud, *De l'interprétation*.<sup>76</sup>

Lacan was completely astounded when the book was published in May 1965. Immediately, he realised that the book would be successful, as no such extensive and well-documented book on Freud had appeared since that of Dalbiez. In fact, Ricoeur did exactly what Lacan was advocating: going back from the neo-Freudians to Freud. But almost nothing of Lacan's thought appeared in the book. Worse still: Ricoeur stated explicitly that he would not deal with the post-Freudians, Lacan included.<sup>77</sup> He restricted himself to a philosophical reading of Freud, and referred thereby to Herbert Marcuse, Philip Rieff and J.C. Flugel.<sup>78</sup>

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73. For an account, see E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.317-328; The proceedings were published: H. Ey (ed.), *L'inconscient (IVe Colloque de Bonneval)* (Bibliothèque Neuro-Psychiatrique de Langue Française) Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1966. However, one does not find in these proceedings, recorded on pp.159-170, the original text of Lacan's part in the discussion, as the text was rewritten by him in 1964.

74. *Le transfert*, Paris, Seuil, 1991.

75. *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux en psychanalyse*, Paris, Seuil, 1973; Engl. tr.: *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, London, Penguin Press, 1986.

76. P. Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, Paris, Seuil, 1965, pp.358-359. Engl. tr.: *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977. This translation mentions: 'The Terry Lecture', while the book contains much more than the three lectures from 1961. Ricoeur extensively lectured on the topic in Louvain in 1962. See E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.398-405.

77. Ricoeur refers to Lacan only in a footnote, as being among those who insisted upon the fact that language is the medium of psychoanalysis. He refers further to the book by W. Huber, H. Piron and A. Vergote, *La psychanalyse science de l'homme*, Brussels, Dessart, 1964. See: P. Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, Paris, Seuil, 1965, pp.358-359.

78. P. Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, Paris, Seuil, 1965, p.8.

Ricoeur's *De l'interprétation* is essentially an attempt to read Freud from a Hegelian perspective. In this, Ricoeur deals rather extensively with the views of A. Vergote and A. de Waelhens on the possible relations and distinctions between phenomenology and psychoanalysis<sup>79</sup> - views those two authors were actually leaving behind at that very moment, as I personally remember, being their student in those years. Ricoeur said that one should radically accept the reductive and past-oriented element in Freud's analytical doctrine, but that this should be complemented by a teleological view, directed towards the future. However, at the end of his book, Ricoeur confesses that he did not believe that Hegelian dialectics could overcome Freudian psychoanalysis in the sense that religious truths could become objects of rational proof. He said he continued to align himself with Karl Barth, who linked faith not with the intellect but with the will, the latter having to undergo the appeal of what one can only call a *kerugma*.<sup>80</sup> Ricoeur concludes by stating that he hoped that a phenomenological approach to religion in the style of Van der Leeuw and Éliade could be connected with a kerygmatic exegesis in the spirit of Barth and Bultmann.

Ricoeur's book was enthusiastically received by some, but sharply criticized in harsh reviews made by Lacanian psychoanalysts. M. Foucault, who was very interested in Lacanian thought in those days, arranged for Ricoeur to write a reply.<sup>81</sup> As a consequence of his disappointment with Ricoeur's book, Lacan decided to write his own book. Up until then, Lacan's writings had not been at all numerous and they were disseminated in very diverse publications. Mobilizing nearly everybody he knew and receiving unlimited support from his editor, François Wahl, Lacan was able to have his own *Écrits* published in November 1966, a year after Ricoeur's book and a few months after another famous book, M. Foucault's *Les mots et les choses*. Lacan immediately became the psychoanalytical representative of structuralist thought.

As to Ricoeur, he was so exasperated by the way he had been treated by the Lacanians that, for a long time, he did not publish any further articles on psychoanalysis. When he finally and exceptionally did so, it was in

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79. Ricoeur refers to A. Vergote, 'L'intérêt philosophique de la psychanalyse freudienne', *Archives de philosophie* 1958 (21) 26-59, and A. de Waelhens, 'Réflexions sur les rapports de la phénoménologie et de la psychanalyse' in id. *Existence et signification*, Louvain/Paris, Nauwelaerts, 1958. See: P. Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, Paris, Seuil, 1965, pp.366-380.

80. P. Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, Paris, Seuil, 1965, pp.504-505.

81. E. Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. Vol. 2: *La bataille de cent ans*, Paris, Seuil, 1986, pp.403-405.

Belgium in the book dedicated to the memory of A. De Waelhens.<sup>82</sup> Although Ricoeur has repeatedly said that he never really understood Lacan, he had nevertheless become aware of the fact that the formulation 'Le symbole donne à penser' deeply needed to be corrected. He realised a symbol could not be interpreted as if it were an autonomous entity. It could only be understood within the context of a given myth, a given culture. The theme of the 'symbolic order', introduced by Lacan in order to understand the differences between neurosis and psychosis, became a widely accepted topic. Influenced by this general structural reflection upon symbol and metaphor, Ricoeur's attention was drawn to the active part taken by the subject in the use of metaphors (*La métaphore vive*, 1975) and to the act of reading as a personal act of appropriation of meaning within the interpersonal and inter-generational relationships which produce meaning (*Temps et récit*, 1983).

### **A psychology of religion inspired by Lacan**

If, for Ricoeur, contact with Lacan resulted in dropping his enquiry into psychoanalysis and religion, for others it meant a new impulse to rethink the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion on a fundamental level. A whole series of theologians became inspired by Lacan. As to Lacan himself, he continued to make references to the religious history of mankind and of Christianity in particular in the subsequent phases of the development of his theory. This is particularly true for the part of Lacan's work in which he places the emphasis upon the most fundamental but also most treacherous type of attachment to the object, to '*la chose*', and for the part in which he deals with the peculiarity of female desire.

In the space left in this already too lengthy article, we can only briefly mention some of the authors whose thinking stems from the crucial years we are dealing with - a survey of the French psychology of religion up until now would certainly need a whole book. The central theme taken by nearly everyone dealing with psychoanalysis and religion in those days was Lacan's view on the essential function of the name of the father, the subsequent distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic, and the fact that a symbol does receive its meaning from the symbolic order to which it pertains. In a

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82. Ricoeur himself says: 'Quant au reproche que je me suis fait, d'avoir sous-estimé la part clinique et d'avoir majoré les écrits théoriques de Freud, je m'en suis expliqué dans un essai publié en Belgique - et non en France! - dans le volume d'hommage à Alphonse de Waelhens, *Qu'est-ce que l'homme?*' (P. Ricoeur, *La critique et la conviction*, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 1995, p. 111. Obviously, he refers to his text: 'La question de la preuve dans les écrits psychanalytiques de Freud', in *Qu'est-ce que l'homme? Philosophie/Psychanalyse. Hommage à Alphonse de Waelhens (1911-1981)*, Brussels, Facultés Universitaires St Louis, 1982, pp. 591-619. There is however an earlier version of this text: 'The Question of Proof in Freud's Psychoanalytical Writings', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 25 (1977) nr. 4, pp. 835-871.

very curious way, these ideas of Lacan were sometimes used to corroborate some moralistic views. His conception that the symbol essentially belongs to a symbolic order became an argument to support the view that it should be a moral duty to uphold culturally established differences, e.g. the firm distinction between male and female, which entailed some strange consequences, such as, for example, that homosexuality seemed to be forbidden in the name of psychoanalysis. I remember our student criticisms on these moralistic appropriations that did not make a distinction between the necessary function of the symbolic order, in so far as it shapes the ego-ideal, and the tyranny of the super-ego. We summarised them as follows: 'Thus, the best way to respect the otherness of the other would be for a white heterosexual male to have sex with a black lesbian!' Of course there were less stupid attempts to underpin a moral concern with Lacanian categories. A typical book in favour of this type of use of Lacan, which I personally did not like but was rather well received, was that by D. Vasse, *Le temps du désir* (1969).<sup>83</sup>

More important was the emphasis Lacan placed on language, which made theologians reflect on the status of religious language, and especially on the name of God. J. Pohier is the first one to be named in this respect.<sup>84</sup> After his philosophical and theological studies, this French Dominican had been sent to Montreal (Canada) to study psychology from 1956 to 1959, since this seemed to be a good basis for teaching moral theology afterwards. Back in Paris, he was indeed appointed Professor of Moral Theology at the Dominican theological faculty 'Le Saulchoir' near Paris. There, he soon became involved in the psychoanalytical world, and became especially acquainted with Conrad Stein, an open-minded analyst who had remained in the IPA-affiliated *Société psychanalytique de Paris*, but who was also convinced that Lacanian thought was important and one should deal with it. In the midst of the controversy his book had raised, Ricoeur asked the *Esprit* journal to find a theologian with some psychoanalytical experience to give a fair review of his book. Pohier was asked to perform this task and he wrote an extensive text in which he discussed Ricoeur's work with respect, sympathy and criticism. But Lacanian sympathy was not alien to Pohier, and the title given to the review stressed this: *Au nom du père*, in the name of the father,<sup>85</sup> - a title Pohier would use in 1972 for a subsequent book in which he added some other articles to his review.<sup>86</sup>

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83. The book has just (1997) been reprinted as a pocket book in the famous French collection *Points*.

84. I am tributary to the research carried out by W. Krikilion for his nearly completed doctoral dissertation on J. Pohier.

85. J. Pohier, 'Au nom du père', *Esprit* 1966 (34) nr. 347, pp.480-500 and nr. 348 (April 1967) pp.947-970.

86. J.M. Pohier, *Au nom du père. Recherches théologiques et psychanalytiques*, Paris, Cerf, 1972.

We should not forget that Lacan's *Écrits* had not yet appeared at the moment Pohier wrote his review on Ricoeur. Nevertheless, it is clear that the core of Lacan's thought was already well known in those days, and therefore Pohier would also be acquainted with it although he did not belong to the Lacanian in-crowd. This appears in the two central points of criticism raised by Pohier. Firstly, he refutes Ricoeur's distinction between religion and faith (*foi*),<sup>87</sup> whereby psychoanalysis would challenge religion but leave the character of faith untouched. Secondly, he criticizes Ricoeur's conception that the aim of psychoanalysis is to 'demolish' the oedipus complex,<sup>88</sup> (*La démolition de l'oedipe, détruire le complexe de l'oedipe*) so that one would become able to renounce the father.

Concerning the distinction between religion and faith, Pohier is aware that he here faces the distinction between the Catholic and the Protestant tradition. He goes deeper into that distinction at the end of his article. According to his view, the experience of contingency that marks human life cannot but express a certain affinity of the essence of God with the essence of man. Thus, Catholic trust in natural theology remains, for Pohier, the cornerstone for speaking about God. But Pohier appeals to Lacan in order to corroborate his position that one cannot say that Freud's critique is relevant for religion but leaves faith untouched. In this alternative, advanced by Ricoeur, 'religion' is to be understood as the human attempt to make God an object that can be apprehended by the human mind - something radically rejected by K. Barth - while faith would be the human response to the invitation addressed by the unknowable Other. The latter term in the alternative is, however, still more subject to psychoanalytic critique, according to Pohier, for we have learned from Lacan that believing oneself to be the object of love of someone else is the biggest illusion we can foster.<sup>89</sup> In other words, faith is,

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87. Common French does not have two different words to distinguish faith from belief. In both cases *Foi* is used. Only specialistic academic literature makes use of *croyance* to point to belief, but in common French the word does not refer to religious belief.

88. Lacan has severely criticised the way '*der Untergang des Ödipus-Komplexes*' had been translated in the *Standard Edition* as the 'demolition' of the Oedipus complex. For Lacan, the Oedipus complex was not a phase that disappeared once it had been dealt with and left behind, but it gave rise to a structure shaping the human psyche for one's whole lifetime.

89. 'Avouons ne pas être très satisfait de la solution esquissée par certains, soucieux d'assumer aussi bien la psychanalyse que la foi, et qui se fait encore sur le dos de la religion: celle-ci serait animée par le désir de l'homme pour Dieu, et comme telle soumise à toutes les vicissitudes dénoncées par Freud; la foi, elle, serait le témoin du désir de Dieu pour l'homme, et comme telle serait d'un autre ordre. Pour qu'une telle distinction, assurément fort utile et fondée comme nous le verrons, soit ici efficace, il faudrait pouvoir affirmer que la foi n'a rien à voir avec le désir de l'homme pour Dieu, ce qui nous semble théologiquement très contestable; mais il faudrait également que le désir de Dieu pour l'homme soit un terrain psychanalytiquement plus sûr que le désir de l'homme pour Dieu. Or non seulement il n'en est rien, mais nous savons au contraire, en partie grâce aux efforts de Jacques Lacan, que se croire l'objet du désir de l'autre est par excellence le terrain du leurre. L'illusion de cette foi qu'on veut préserver risque d'être plus

more than religion, an illusion that is unmasked by psychoanalysis.

The second critique has to do with the 'demolition' of the Oedipus complex that psychoanalysis would accomplish. Ricoeur had been impressed by Freud's indication of how much the representation of the father is used in religion. As he thought that psychoanalysis unchained the analysands from their father, he was convinced that the same should be performed on the religious level. There too, the references to a father should be demolished. The result would be a more pure faith in a God who was completely the 'Other'. Pohier's criticizes Ricoeur as someone who has understood nothing of psychoanalysis' therapeutic aims. Thinking that one can free oneself from a father and that, in doing so, one could really become 'one-self' is the most extreme narcissistic fantasy and illusion one can foster! The real aim of psychoanalysis is to relativize the way the father-image has been loaded by the imagination, so that one can reject the idealised representation of the perfect father.

According to Pohier, Ricoeur missed the essential point in psychoanalysis because he did not deal with castration, an essential theme in Freud's thought. Explicitly referring to Lacan, Pohier insists upon the fact that castration has nothing to do with deprivation of the phallus, but with the experience that one *is* not that sublime part of the body.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the issue of castration is not the distinction between male and female. A different problem is at stake than that of 'gender'. The experience of castration means, fundamentally, that one is not the sublime object to which the mother's desire is attached, and in realising that nobody is the idealised penis of the *phallus*, the person of the father is relativized as being only one father among others, a representative of the principle of fatherhood.<sup>91</sup>

We have dwelt so long on Pohier's article because he clearly distinguishes two different alternatives, which will often be amalgamated later on. On the one hand, there is the alternative between Catholic trust in natural theology and the Barthian view on faith as initiated by God, the radically

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radicale encore que celle de cette religion qu'on s'accorderait à dénoncer.' J. Pohier, *Au nom du père*, pp.21-22.

90. See the lengthy footnote on pp.44-45.

91. 'En désignant ce renoncement comme un renoncement au père, on fait bien droit à la façon dont le père peut effectivement être constitué comme objet mythique de la toute-puissance du désir. Mais on risque d'entretenir un très grave équivoque, comme si le renoncement devait aboutir à «la constitution d'un ordre de choses privé de tout coefficient paternel, d'un ordre anonyme, impersonnel» (p.320). Car tel n'est pas l'ordre du symbolique, en tant qu'on le distingue de l'ordre de l'imaginaire: et l'ordre du symbolique ne saurait en aucune façon être caractérisé par le renoncement au père. Tout au contraire, c'est en lui que le père prend pour le fils sa véritable valeur, c'est en lui que le fils peut se constituer authentiquement comme sujet qui est fils. Il y a là une différence radicale entre ce que Paul Ricoeur croit devoir retenir de la psychanalyse et ce que nous croyons devoir en retenir. L'importance de son enjeu serait clairement apparue s'il avait été le moins question du complexe de castration.' J. Pohier, *Au nom du père. Recherches théologiques et psychanalytiques*, Paris, Cerf, 1972, p.44.

Other. On the other hand, there is Lacan's distinction between the order of the imaginary and the order of the symbolic. Those are two different problems. It is surely deceptive to say that the order of faith is identical with the order of the symbolic, and the order of religion is identical with the order of the imaginary!

A. Vergote is certainly the author who has worked most extensively through Lacanian thought and its relevance both for psychoanalysis in general and for the psychology of religion in particular. The reference to psychoanalysis in general is to be understood at a very practical level. When he came back to Belgium, he founded the Belgian School for Psychoanalysis, on 8 July 1969, along with several other psychoanalysts who had been trained in Paris, Switzerland and the Netherlands in societies that were not affiliated to the IPA. This society was one deeply influenced by Lacan but also one which, up until now, has been reluctant to be totally absorbed by too-sectarian Lacanian groups. Having been the president and member of the board of the School several times, Vergote was confronted with the vicissitudes of transference in such institutions, and kept very close to psychoanalytic practice. A few years previously, along with two other founders of this School, he had written a book that would be translated into many languages: *La psychanalyse, science de l'homme*.<sup>92</sup>

As for the psychology of religion: that same year a textbook that would have the same broad diffusion was published by him.<sup>93</sup> In that period, Louvain was an important University centre where many students from the United States came to study philosophy and theology. There were also many students from other countries, particularly South America. Vergote was an alluring professor and conducted more than fifty doctoral dissertations. So his influence is not to be overlooked, especially in the Romanic world.

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92. W. Huber, H. Piron and A. Vergote, *La psychanalyse, science de l'homme*, Brussels, Dessart, 1964; Dutch translation: *Psychoanalyse, wetenschap van de mens*, Antwerp, De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1966; Spanish tr.: *El conocimiento del hombre por el psicoanálisis*, Madrid, Guadarrama, 1967; Italian tr.: *La psicanalisi scienza dell'uomo*, Torino, Borla, 1968; Port. tr.: *A psicanálise. Ciência do Homem*, Lissabon, Livros do Brasil, 1972.

93. A. Vergote, *Psychologie religieuse*, Brussels, Dessart, 1966. Dutch tr.: *Godsdienstpsychologie*, Tielt, Lannoo, 1967; Italian tr.: *Psicologia religiosa*, Torino, Borla, 1967; Eng. tr.: *The Religious Man. A Psychological Study of Religious Attitudes*, Dublin, Gill & MacMillan, 1969, and Dayton (Ohio), Pflaum Press, 1969; Spanish tr.: *Psicologia religiosa*, Madrid, Taurus, 1969; German tr.: *Religionspsychologie*, Olten, Walter, 1970. A completely reworked version of the book was issued in 1983: *Religion, foi, incroyance. Étude psychologique*, Liège, Mardaga, 1983. Dutch tr.: *Religie, geloof en ongeloof. Psychologische studie*, Antwerp, De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1983; Ital. tr.: *Religione, fede, incredulità. Studio psicologico*, Milano, Ed. Paoline, 1985; Engl. tr.: *Religion, Belief and Unbelief: A Psychological Study*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 1997.



A survey of his work<sup>94</sup> shows the same initial concerns as that of other theologians influenced by Lacan. The theory of symbolism and the importance of the metaphor of the father are investigated in so far as they necessarily shape religious language.<sup>95</sup> However, Vergote did not restrict himself to a strictly psychoanalytical approach. He also tried to match psychoanalytical insights with experimental data. Developmental research on the representation of God and its content was a main topic. He became well known for his transcultural study on the representation of God when he showed that, despite the name, the God represented as the Father in fact possessed many maternal qualities.<sup>96</sup> Lastly, and not least, he applied clinical psychoanalytical insights to religious pathology.

To understand the importance of the last approach, something more should be said of Lacan's clinical views in the area of differential psychopathology. Lacan advocated a structural view on psychopathology. One should avoid enumerating isolated and observable symptoms, but investigate how they could relate to each other in a particular structure. Lacan distinguished three different structures: the neurotic, the psychotic and the perverse. Belonging to one or another of these structures did not automatically mean psychopathology. Everybody was shaped along one of those structures. The difference between normalcy and pathology had to do with the quantitative aspect of the gradations along one of those axes.

One of Vergote's main books, *Guilt and Desire*,<sup>97</sup> presents the analysis of one of those psychopathological structures, the neurotic one. In this book, he carefully describes, on a psychodynamic level, the two basic forms of neurosis: obsession and hysteria. After having shown that the pathological forms of those two possible human structures consist of exaggerations of traits that belong to normal psychology, he analyses the way these two forms of neurotic structure can organize religious material. The book is a very good example of the Lacanian and structuralist perspective. On the one hand, religion is understood as an pre-existing system, with creeds, rituals, and ecclesiastical organisation. On the other hand, there is the human being that

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94. See J.-M. Jaspard, 'Pourquoi les hommes sont-ils religieux, si ce n'est par besoin? Histoire d'une déjà longue enquête menée par A. Vergote', in *Over de grens. De religieuze 'behoefte' kritisch onderzocht*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 1987, pp.1-18.

95. A. Vergote, *Interprétation du langage religieux*, Paris, Seuil, 1974. Italian tr.: *La teologia i la sua archeologia*, Fossano, Esperienze, 1974.

96. American textbooks often seem to have retained only that element from a much broader work, regardless of how important a following study might be: A. Vergote and A. Tamayo, *The Parental Figures and the Representation of God. A Psychological and Cross-Cultural Study*, Louvain, Leuven University Press and The Hague, Mouton, 1980.

97. A. Vergote, *Dette et désir. Deux axes chrétiens et la dérive pathologique*, Paris, Seuil, 1978. Dutch tr.: *Bekentenis en begeerte? Psychoanalytische verkenning in de religie*, Antwerpen, De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1979; Engl. tr.: *Guilt and Desire. Religious Attitudes and their Pathological Derivatives*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988.

will approach this system and get involved in it according to the peculiar structure of his or her own psychology. Sometimes, the way the own psychological structure handles the religious system is pathological, but sometimes it remains inside the boundaries of normalcy, even when it surprises us. For many readers, Vergote's description of the 'normal' hysterical religious involvement of Theresa of Avila will remain a surprising, but challenging insight.

Vergote's most recent book on sublimation is a fundamental reflection on psychoanalytic practice.<sup>98</sup> Giving full weight to Freud's intuition that sublimation is an essential process in psychoanalytic therapy - and in life in general - but acknowledging that Freud failed to find a consistent theory on sublimation, Vergote proposes not to drop the concept, but to investigate which theoretical presuppositions obstructed Freud in his theorising of sublimation. One should prefer to abandon those presuppositions rather than the intuition concerning sublimation. The book surely asks for a new and further elaboration of the relation between psychoanalysis and religion - and I would add: and theology as a specific activity of the human mind.

### **Sex, guilt, faith and the longing for naiveté**

Let us look back. At the moment that Catholicism was trying to untie the knots of sexual morality, a sentence uttered by a Protestant philosopher was picked up and eagerly accepted as if it would rescue a Church: second naiveté. The formulation was linked to a specific view on hermeneutics of a symbol that gives rise to thought. Meanwhile it has become clear that the term 'symbol' can no longer be used in a simplistic way to sustain an alternative based on real/symbolic. We cannot rely on a simplistic model of symbolic experience in which symbolisation means the capacity to replace, in one's imagination, one object by the other. Anglo-Saxon psychology of religion, favouring Winnicott and his theory on the transitional sphere, leaves the central problem of symbolism unresolved. We need a more complex model, in which other aspects of the process of symbolisation, e.g. the typology of the intersubjective relations fostering the acceptance and the transmission of metaphoric messages, are taken into account. Ricoeur recognized this very well, and it would not be fair to appeal to his authority to reintroduce such a simplistic opposition.

On the other hand, one should also be aware that the discussion on symbols and metaphors had the unfortunate effect that a real problem, which was associated with a too simplistic theory of symbolism, was skipped: the link between the experience of guilt and belief.

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98. A. Vergote, *La psychanalyse à l'épreuve de la sublimation*. Paris, Cerf, 1997.

Let us remember that Ricoeur's *Finitude et culpabilité*, with its conclusion on the second naïveté, was the final product of a research project that the author had been aiming to carry out since the publication of his doctoral thesis in 1949 on the *Philosophie de la volonté*. He wanted to give a philosophical elucidation of what was for him, a French Protestant, essential to belief: the *servum arbitrium*, the enslaved will. Seen from this point of view, the famous quoted sentence on the second naïveté does not deal with religion of religious symbolism in general, but with symbols of guilt and thus with the specific forms of belief that presuppose a specific psychological experience of guilt and grief. To be more precise, and to follow the path Ricoeur traced in the Preface of the first volume of *Finitude et culpabilité*, Ricoeur was struck by the fact that the problem of evil could not be understood as being just a variation in the category of limitation. There was something opaque in evil in its participation in human reality. This dark side could not be captured by means of making use of so-called phenomenological reduction in order to achieve a 'Wesenschau', a clear insight into the essential. A certain type of empirical philosophical method should be adopted in order to get a secure grip on it. Looking in this way at the given fact of evil, Ricoeur found that, in a first phase, one came across several myths giving expression to the mystery of the evil in various ways. There are myths telling us of an initial struggle between the powers of order and the powers of chaos, on the exile of the soul in a body, myths describing the human as being blinded by a hostile power, myths telling us the story of an original sin. But behind these mythical stories, in a second stage, something more essential appeared: the opaque character of guilt expressed always itself in a discourse of confession, and this discourse of confession was not addressed in direct speech, but made use of symbols. That was the reason Ricoeur studied the symbols of evil.

Thus, the real question behind the topic of the second naïveté is not 'Can I still be a believer now I know that so many biblical stories are not true?', but 'Can I still be a believer now that I no longer bear the Christian spirituality based on the experience of guilt?'.

Unfortunately, this essential topic was not further elaborated in Ricoeur's work. What a pity, as the differences in the experience of guilt constituted the parting of the ways between the Reformation and Counter Reformation! Therefore, instead of hurrying on to the problem of symbolism, let us dwell for a moment on what had made an impact on Ricoeur when he was dealing with the opaque character of evil. This could only be expressed in what he called 'a discourse of confession', a way of speaking coined by the structure of confession, finding expression in the problem of symbolism. Ricoeur touches upon a point that has had a tremendous importance in the religious history of the Western world: in which way do we need feelings of guilt in order to be able to believe?

History teaches us that the real core of the discussion between Protestantism and Catholicism was not primarily the question of the content of what one should or should not believe. It had nothing to do with the content of the propositions a Christian believer should accept as being true, but with the very nature of the act of believing: was it an act of the intellect, eventually constrained by the will, or was it an act of the emotional sphere, whereby the expression in sentences which the intellect could accept or reject was only of a very secondary nature? Protestantism insisted upon the fact that, in the Bible, the words used for 'to believe' (in Greek: *pisteuo*) did not refer to an intellectual assent at all, but to faith, to an inner experience of trusting someone. So Catholics were reproached for promoting a way of believing that was a mere *fides historica*, a belief that was emptied of its essential core of trust, being reduced to a 'belief *that*'. At the same time, Luther, in particular, condemned the Catholic way of linking belief with anxiety and favoured a very confident *fiducia* in God's grace. In its reaction, the Council of Trent explicitly stated that anxiety and fear of punishment were actually necessary stages of faith.

From these discussions onwards, quite different types of pastoral care were established in order to promote the specific choice about what was the essence of *pisteuo* (the English distinction between belief and faith is still a reflection of that polemic, and introduces a clear dichotomy in terms that could previously be interpreted in different ways). A careful analysis on a psycho-historical level further reveals several types of inner distortions and conflicts on the respective pathways chosen by the adherents of both opinions. If, in theory, *pisteuo* (belief/faith), considered along the lines of the structure of knowledge, was favoured by Roman Catholicism with natural theology being put to the fore, in actual practice it was baroque art and popular devotions, reflecting a deeper psychological level, which were the more essential forms of Catholic *pisteuo*. Even today, people who are converted to Catholicism are generally not looking for more rationality and logical formulations, but tend to be fascinated by the incense, liturgy and a *Salve Regina* by candlelight. In contrast, in Protestantism, heavy struggles about the precise formulation of the content of the creed were - and are - not unusual. Whereas the Protestant founding fathers insisted not upon the propositions in which one should believe but rather upon the inner experience of trust, the *fiducia*, Anglo-Saxon philosophy of religion mostly deals with religious creeds as if they were a set of propositions functioning in the human mind the same way as the content of knowledge, with the exception that they do not stem from testable experience.<sup>99</sup>

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99. See, for a typical example of such an approach that does not pay any attention to the distortion between the official statements on the essence of Catholic vs. Protestant belief and the actual way it functions in the believer's mind: Linda Zagzebski, 'Religious Knowledge and the Virtues of the

An element that, up until now, has not been studied in this context is the importance given by Catholicism to sexuality. Catholics have developed extensive treatises on sexual morality, with thousands of cases discussing in great detail how the sexual act should be performed. Protestantism has not occupied itself with this matter. This difference has continued right up until today. When I, being a Catholic, read Ricoeur on the opaque character of evil, I immediately think of sex, and when I hear about a discourse of confession, I cannot but think of M. Foucault's central text in his first volume of his history of sexuality, a book that in its original French edition bears the title 'The Search for Knowledge', in which he shows how Catholic pastorals placed the emphasis upon the obligation of analysing someone's own sexual desires:

'This is the essential thing: that Western man has been drawn for three centuries to the task of telling everything concerning his sex; that since the classical age there has been a constant optimization and an increasing valorization of the discourse on sex; that this carefully analytical discourse was meant to yield multiple effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation, and modification of desire itself.'<sup>100</sup>

A hypothesis comes to mind: could it be that this importance accorded by Catholicism to sex reveals that different psychological levels are involved in the Catholic and in the Protestant way of dealing with the opaque character of evil? Does this perhaps explain, more than pure intellectual market mechanisms, why Anglo-Saxon psychology of religion focuses upon the pre-genital and the object-relations, while the genital and the Oedipal are more akin to Catholic sensibility? An attractive new field for research could be opened, and this psycho-historical research could make us aware of different psychological types in the psychological activity we call 'believing', and thus in the varieties of post-critical belief.

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Mind', in Linda Zagzebski (ed.), *Rational faith. Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, Notre Dame (Notre Dame University Press), 1993.

100. 'L'essentiel est bien là. Que l'homme occidental ait été depuis trois siècles attaché à cette tâche de tout dire sur son sexe; que depuis l'âge classique il y ait eu une majoration constante et une valorisation toujours plus grande du discours sur le sexe; et qu'on ait attendu de ce discours, soigneusement analytique, des effets multiples de déplacement, d'intensification, de réorientation, de modification sur le désir lui-même.' M. Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p.33. Engl. tr.: *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction*, Middlesex, Penguin, 1978, p.23.